WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA TESTIMONY

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HandMade In America

Craft Heritage

The study area is home to over 4,000 craftspeople, both full-time professionals and second-income producers who contribute $122 million annually to the region's economy. This concentration of craftspeople is the third largest in the United States surpassed only by New York City/Hudson River Valley and San Francisco Bay Area. **The region is the origin of both the traditional craft movement (1800s - early 1900s) and the contemporary craft movement (1940s) in the United States. Three of the country's most famous craft schools** are found in the region, attracting hundreds of students and craftspeople to settle in places such as the John C. Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, Haywood Community College at Waynesville, and Penland School of Craft at Penland. In addition to the large guild, the **Southern Highland Craft Guild**, there are numerous small local guilds for weavers, spinners and quilters.

The region's first craft influence was by the Cherokee Indians resulting from the region's wealth of natural resources. The resources included honeysuckle, river cane and white oak for baskets; willows for furniture; silver bell and rhododendron for making canes; and the country's largest variety of wood for carving bowls, spoons and statues. Natural dyes were derived from wild pokeberries, blueberries, black walnuts, yellow root and numerous other plants. Kaolin clay for pottery is of such high quality that English tableware manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood used it to make his famous Queensware. A Wedgwood dinner service of Macon County clay graced the tables of Catherine the Great.

As previously stated in this study, the arrival of the Scotch-Irish in the early 17th century dominated the development of the region's heritage and culture. It is their influence in the region's music, arts, language, dance and craft that has dominated until recent years. In the beginning, craft was created for function – clothes, furniture, farm implements, dishes and utensils. In the isolated sections of the mountains, family farms supplied many of their own needs; and what was produced by tradespeople elsewhere was often domestic work life in the mountains. **Older forms of domestic weaving, pottery, basketry and other folk crafts survived long enough to be written about, organized and cast in an altered form for the modern age. While not all these crafts were unique to the region, what was unusual about them was their persistence after they had disappeared in the remainder of the country.**

As the industrial revolution took place in the early 1900s, two major influences on craft and architecture were directly credited to George Vanderbilt, son of Cornelius Vanderbilt of shipping and railroad fame, and Edwin Grove, entrepreneur and inventor of Grove's Chill Tonic. When construction began on the **Biltmore House**, it became apparent that European craftsmen would be needed to do the work. Over 1,000 individuals contributed to the construction of the house, including stonecutters, woodworkers, masons, sculptors, carvers, carpenters, tile-makers, glaziers, blacksmiths, painters, and their apprentices. After construction of the house, many remained in Asheville where their legacy lives on in the city's architecture, housing, churches, streetscapes, stone carvings and ironwork.

In addition, Edith Vanderbilt organized **Biltmore Industries**, a training school for young men and women in mountain crafts, particularly woodcarving and weaving. The industry continued for 70 years. During its heyday, 40 looms wove products that garnered an international reputation. In the early ‘80s, the industry was closed, and currently, the Biltmore Homespun Museum operates at its location.

Just as the study area fostered the traditional craft movement in the United States, so has it served as the national site for the origin of the Contemporary Crafts Movement. The Black Mountain College initiated this movement in the 1930s-1950s. The college was founded in 1932 by John Andrews Rice and located in Black Mountain, near Asheville. It was a small liberal arts school with a then radical approach to the educational process. It attempted to bring together the concepts of individual creativity and community responsibility to form an environment of mutual inspiration. The college struggled through 24 years of existence until closing in 1956. Principle leaders were Rice, Annie and Joseph Albers, and Charles Olsen. It was at the college that the Albers introduced contemporary design influenced by the German Bauhaus movement, often reflected in Annie Albers' weaving. The college

served as a seminal atmosphere for many of the 20th century's important figures in the arts including Buckminster Fuller, Kenneth Noland, Jonathan Williams, Robert Rauschenberg, Mare Cunningham, Ed Dorn, Arin Siskind, Alfred Kazin and many others.

Craft Heritage Trails Project
A 1994 economic impact study sponsored by HandMade showed that craft contributed $122 million per year to the region's economy. Based on these assets and the educational needs of the region, HandMade has focused on the development of entrepreneurial, educational and community revitalization efforts for craftspeople and citizens.

"The Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina" – Working with craftspeople, business owners, chambers of commerce, the Host organizations, tourism offices, state and local governments, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, **HandMade produced the first heritage tourism guidebook for North Carolina.** A series of seven driving trails takes visitors to more than 400 historic craft sites, private studios, shops and galleries, historic lodgings and restaurants featuring local cuisine**. A total of 40,000 guidebooks have been sold to date. Shops and gallery owners have increased sales by 24 percent. Seventy-three percent of trail visitors have spent over $200 for crafts.**
HandMade will continue to market their craft trails through updating and continued publication of their guidebook. This publication is already in its second printing and continues to grow each year, both in content and in distribution. The overall marketing and advertising program will help to promote the guidebook to visitors.

HandMade has plans to explore new marketing arenas, such as High Point Furniture Show and converting closed schools to training facilities and studio incubators. In addition, they are in the process of developing package tours and itineraries for group tours. They are currently working with Smithsonian Tours to accomplish this goal.

Plans are on the drawing board to expand use of Craft Across Curriculum program to teach math, science, and language arts in the public schools, develop apprenticeships in craft studios, and offer training in marketing and business planning for craft entrepreneurs

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Western North Carolina is home to music traditions of national, and even international, significance. Distinctive styles of stringband music, bluegrass, unaccompanied ballad singing, blues, and sacred music such as unaccompanied lined-out hymn singing, shape note singing, and gospel music have developed and flourished in the Southern Appalachians of North Carolina and surrounding states over many generations.

Ralph Rinzler, creator of the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife held annually on the Washington Mall, **acknowledged the cultural importance of western North Carolina when he described it as "one of the richest repositories of folk song and lore in the southeastern United States."** The state first attracted the attention of folk song collectors in the early decades of the twentieth century, when British scholar Cecil Sharp visited the Southern Appalachians to document ballad singing. His *English Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians,* a monumental work that first appeared in 1917, **documented more ballads and singers in North Carolina than in any other state in the southeast.**

Like Sharp, other music scholars and collectors including Rinzler, Robert W. Gordon and Alan Lomax from the Library of Congress, Frank C. Brown of Duke University, folk singer Pete Seeger, and Frank and Anne Warner, among others, have been attracted to the region to document the artistry of western North Carolina's traditional musicians. Their recordings, along with commercial releases by record companies that date back to the 1920s, constitute an astounding archive that documents deep community music traditions and extraordinary individual artistry. The recordings of some musicians from the region, such as Doc Watson, Frank Profitt, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, and Etta Baker, have proved so powerful that audiences across our country and throughout the world have embraced the music and even journeyed to North Carolina to hear it.

The National Park Service recognized the wealth and vitality of these traditions when it established the **Blue Ridge Music Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway near the North Carolina and Virginia state line.** The Interpretive Plan for the Center notes that southern Appalachian folk music and dance are among our nation's richest traditions, testifying to "the creativity of people from the region" and recording "the cultural history of mountain communities over generations." In further acknowledgement of the importance of the music traditions of the Blue Ridge, the National Endowment of the Arts has awarded prestigious National Heritage Fellowships to twelve traditional musicians from western North Carolina and Virginia.

History

The development of the music heard in the region today began prior to the Revolutionary War. Parties of Germans, Scotch-Irish, and English "border people" moved down the Valley Road from Pennsylvania into western Virginia and North Carolina during the colonial era. These groups brought ballads, instrumental dance tunes, and hymns from their diverse homelands. Some of this music survives today in forms that are recognizable as "old country" traditions. However, musical exchange between communities proved particularly potent over time. Eventually music of Southern Appalachians changed into something altogether new as people moved and settled together.

The influence of African culture is particularly important to the development of musical traditions in the region. The European settlers who journeyed down the Valley Road encountered African Americans brought as slaves to foothills farms and plantations when land closer to the coast was worn out by the unrelenting planting of tobacco**. In the Southern Appalachians, the musical concepts from Europe and Africa were fused into whole new ways of thinking about, and playing, music.** The banjo, an African instrument, was combined with the European fiddle to form a uniquely American ensemble—and create a sound that would eventually shape blues, bluegrass, and Country and Western music, among other genres.

Many different styles of religious songs and congregational singing developed in western North Carolina churches throughout the 1800s, and many of them continue in use. One of the older styles—practiced by whites, blacks, and Cherokees--had unaccompanied congregational singing of hymn texts to traditional ballad melodies. Where congregations had few hymn books or could not read, a song leader would "line out" or chant a line or two of the text, then pause while the congregation repeated that text singing a familiar hymn tune, sometimes in a highly ornamented version. Such singing is practiced by Primitive Baptists and German Baptist Brethren still.

Early Methodists developed another style of unaccompanied song that could be caught easily by ear. Their camp-meeting and revival spirituals had texts with repeated lines and choruses and often used melodies derived from traditional dance tunes. Shape-note hymnbooks—ones that used a special shape for each note of the scale to facilitate sight reading—picked up both of these repertories but arranged them for three- or four-part unaccompanied choral performances. Singing masters taught rural people how to read this musical notation, and the song settings came into use both in church worship and in periodic singing conventions. The most popular of these books in the Blue Ridge were William Walker's The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion (1835) and his The Christian Harmony (1867), the latter still used in "singings."

In Primitive Baptist churches today, and in Methodist and other churches for many years, musical instruments were not allowed. The churches did not find them authorized by the New Testament or disliked their association with dissolute behavior, so the church singing was unaccompanied and stood in contrast to much of the music in the secular world outside. By the twentieth century yet another style of singing entered both black and white mountain churches, up-tempo gospel songs performed with pianos, guitars, and other instruments, together with solo performances by featured groups.

Blue Ridge Music Trails

Traditional music continues to thrive in mountain communities of western North Carolina. Cultural specialists who surveyed the region in 1999 to create a resource inventory for a heritage tourism project called the Blue Ridge Music Trails found a variety of public venues where traditional music is presented on a regular basis. Fiddlers' conventions, large and small, are held on many weekends throughout the spring and summer months. Community centers, restaurants, old school houses, campgrounds, and VFW halls are the sites of weekly gatherings of musicians and local residents. Presentation ranges from "picking sessions," where the relationship between musicians and listeners is relaxed and informal, to seated concerts staged at numerous "hometown oprys." African American and European American churches host shape-note singings and welcome all who love this old form of unaccompanied harmony singing.

In addition to this grassroots infrastructure for presenting traditional music, regional colleges and universities have embraced regional culture and offer programs and events where folklorists and cultural specialists supplement performances of traditional music with interpretation. Western Carolina University in Cullowhee produces "Mountain Heritage Day," an annual festival that attracts large audiences to hear traditional music, eat regional foods, and buy crafts. Mars Hill College and Warren Wilson College in North Carolina organize traditional music "camps" where musical instruction is offered along with concerts and workshop performances. Wilkes Community College sponsors MerleFest, a festival that focuses upon the talents of Doc Watson, one of our nation's best-known traditional musicians. In 2001 this event attracted an audience of 77,000 and brought an estimated twelve million dollars into the economies of local communities.

Music traditions in western North Carolina continue to evolve. Young people in mountain communities learn to play traditional

music through informal apprenticeships with relatives and friends, by attending community musical events, and by taking more formal lessons offered in after-school programs. Colleges that offer traditional music camps and workshops provide scholarships so that promising young musicians in the region can learn from experienced players. People from outside of the state are moving to Asheville, Boone, and other towns in an effort to be part of North Carolina's community of traditional musicians. They are bringing new musical ideas and styles to the older traditions and are attracting an enthusiastic young audience to the music. **North Carolina's musical traditions continue to be highlighted in popular culture through films like *Songcatcher* and in best-selling novels such as Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*.**

The Blue Ridge Music Trails is bringing national attention to the vitality and richness of traditional music in western North Carolina. Through a guidebook and website visitors can find venues where they traditional music is experienced in its community settings. These publications include descriptions of the venues and the communities where they are located, information on the roots and development of Appalachian musical traditions, profiles of individual musicians, and extraordinary documentary photography.

Educational programs have developed alongside the guidebook and website. Lesson plans and activities that use traditional music to teach the fourth grade curriculum are now under development in public schools in four western North Carolina counties. The teachers and administrators piloting this program are supported by faculty in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and staff at the North Carolina Arts Council. The Arts Council has also committed funds to expand the **Junior Appalachian Musicians program (JAM).** This after-school programs use local traditional musicians to teach fifth through eighth graders to play traditional music. This year, with NEA Challenge America funds, the Arts Council provided grants to four local rural arts agencies to launch JAM programs.

Projects are also underway to make documentation of the region's finest traditional musicians—now preserved in archives that not easily accessible to the public—available through sound recordings issued with interpretive notes and historic photographs.

CHEROKEE HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Cherokees, unlike most other people living in the Southern Appalachians, believe they have always been here. Their myths and legends mention Pilot Knob in the Shining Rock Wilderness area near the Blue Ridge Parkway as the home of Kanati and Selu, the first man and woman, and they refer to the Kituwah mound site near Bryson City, North Carolina as the site of the mother town of the Cherokee people.

Whatever their origins, it is clear that members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians are descendants of people who have been in the region for a long time. The archaeological record reveals a period of **human habitation in the southern Appalachians dating back more than 11,000 years.** According to linguists, the **Cherokee language,** which is part of the Iroquoian language family, **emerged as a separate distinct language by at least 1500 BC, and by 1,000 AD a distinctively Cherokee way of life had emerged.** By that point, Cherokee people had established cultural patterns that continue to influence their communities. These

included permanent villages, cornfields and gardens, dances, games, ceremonies, the sacred fire, council houses, social organization based on a clan system, and a well developed system of beliefs and practices.

Europeans entered the outskirts of their territory as early as 1540 when Hernando deSoto's expedition passed through, and by the 1650s, Cherokees had also met the British and had begun growing peaches and watermelons acquired through trade. After 1700, the full impact of European contact became evident in cultural exchange, trade goods, intermarriage between Cherokee women and Scots traders, and trips to England by Cherokee leaders. On the negative side, contact also resulted in smallpox epidemics that decimated the population, military campaigns that destroyed Cherokee towns, and the loss of Cherokee territory through treaties.

Between 1759 and 1839, **the Cherokees** made a remarkable recovery from defeat and devastation. They became a **civilization with written language, schools, churches, farms, business enterprises, a written constitution, representative government, and a bilingual newspaper—a period historians call the Cherokee Renaissance.** Missionaries also entered their lives. Moravians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists offered Cherokees education in English, religion, farming, and domestic arts.

Cherokee accomplishments did not protect the Cherokees from removal, however. In 1838 federal soldiers and state militia began moving most of the Cherokee nation to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Among those who remained in North Carolina were some who had successfully applied for citizenship and others that hid in the mountains. A few others escaped from the Trail of Tears or walked back to the mountains of western North Carolina from Oklahoma. About a thousand in all managed to avoid removal. Many members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians today are their descendants.

Although Cherokee political and social institutions were severely disrupted by the removal, the Eastern Cherokees maintained rich cultural traditions. **Two dialects of the Cherokee language continue to be spoken and the tribe actively supports language preservation efforts.** Cherokee traditional artists have received recognition at state and national levels for their outstanding work. Cherokee music and dance, not as widely known as Cherokee crafts, include older ceremonial dances and songs that exist alongside the fancy dances and drum groups associated with more modern powwow celebrations. Bluegrass and country music coexist with hymn singing and other sacred song traditions that contribute to the musical life of Cherokees.

Cherokee Heritage Trails Project

The Cherokee Heritage Trails project recognizes the heritage and traditional culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as one of the most compelling and important stories of the Appalachian region. Like the Blue Ridge Music Trails project, it takes a regional, interstate approach that combines sustainable economic development and cultural conservation. The trail's focus on traditional culture is one that holds unusual promise for being both educational and economically sustainable as it seeks out undervalued cultural assets such as significant Cherokee traditions, authentic tradition bearers, historic sites, and historically important collections that the Eastern band and local mountain communities want to make more accessible.

Although the project encompasses regions of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia that constituted the old homeland of the Cherokee, the project draws mainly on the expertise and participation of members of the Eastern Band, who constitute a majority of the Cherokee Heritage Trails task force and who have worked enthusiastically with other project partners since the project began. In addition to identifying existing venues where tribal members could tell their own stories and interact with visitors, the task force recommended adding sites throughout the region to further enrich the cultural interpretation of an area already noted for its scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. On the basis of cultural inventories developed for the project, the task force eventually approved, and sought approval from, more than 100 sites and 17 events in North North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia for inclusion in the Cherokee Heritage Trails.

In developing the trail system, the task force identified six regional interpretative centers for the project. The main "hub" is the town of Cherokee, North Carolina, located at the southern end of the Blue Ridge Parkway and at the heart of the Qualla Boundary Cherokee Reservation. **This area is home to approximately 10,000 members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, North Carolina's only federally recognized tribe and the largest population of Cherokee Indians outside the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.** Cherokee, North Carolina, has been a tourist destination for many years, but its tourist attractions have often obscured the fact that hundreds of Cherokee artists still practice distinctive traditions of woodcarving, pottery, basketweaving, music, storytelling and other traditional arts.

The institutional home for this project is the **Museum of the Cherokee Indian, which not only offers a historical overview of the Cherokee, but also develops the theme of "Cherokee People Today"** as it guides visitors in their explorations of sites in and around the town of Cherokee and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Under the energetic and imaginative leadership of its current director Ken Blankenship, the museum was entirely renovated and a new award-winning exhibit constructed in 1998 that combines

artifacts, graphics, text, and computer-generated images to tell the story of the Cherokee people from 11,000 years ago to the present day. The museum's focus is not simply historical, however. Through its staff (almost all are members of the Eastern Band) and through its educational and outreach programs, festivals, and workshops, the museum regularly brings its visitors together with many of the best local Cherokee artists.

The **Snowbird Cherokee** community and the story of one of its important leaders, Junaluska, provide the interpretive focus for **the Junaluska Memorial and Museum in Robbinsville, North Carolina.** Here visitors will not only receive an orientation to the area but may also meet Cherokee people, hear the Cherokee language spoken, and learn about some of the most traditional Cherokee practices. As an outgrowth of the Heritage Trails project, the museum has been awarded funding to develop a medicine trail on the museum grounds and to produce an interpretive video about the medicine trail and the Cherokee Snowbird community.

The Cherokee Historical Museum in Murphy, North Carolina is developing an exhibit focused on the places and events in the Murphy area related to Cherokee culture and the Trail of Tears. Known to the Cherokee as "the place of the leech," Murphy still figures in Cherokee legend. At the junction of the Valley and Hiwassee Rivers, *Tlanusi*, the giant leech, once lived and snatched Cherokee children who came close to the riverbank. About four hundred members of the Eastern Band still live on 5,575 acres scattered throughout Cherokee County, near the old Cherokee communities and homesteads of Tomotla, Grape Creek, and Hanging Dog. Scenic drives and side trips from Murphy take visitors to the locations of old Cherokee town sites and mountain trails, including the National Millennium Trail segment of the Unicoi Turnpike.

The town of Franklin, North Carolina plans to host interpretive centers for visitors exploring the sites and stories of more than a dozen Cherokee villages that existed along the Little Tennessee River and its tributaries in the 18th century. Franklin itself is on the site of the old Cherokee town of Nikwasi, and the Nikwasi Mound, once the spiritual center for this area, still stands—close to its original height— in downtown Franklin. The Scottish Tartans Museum, which focuses on the history of the tartan, includes an exhibit of the Cherokees' relationship with the Scots and the Scots-Irish traders. Near Franklin, the Smoky Mountain Host Visitors Center will provide information about the Cherokee heritage of the area as well as an overview of the project and other tourist-related information. A series of scenic drives outlined in the guidebook will allow visitors to explore and interpret the lands surrounding Franklin.

Initial products of the Cherokee Heritage Trails include (1) the *Cherokee Artist Directory***, a guide to more than 50 Cherokee artists** who offer public presentations of Cherokee culture published in 2001 by the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in collaboration with the North Carolina Arts Council and the Cultural Resources Division of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian; (2) a website at www.CherokeeHeritageTrails.org, which serves as a guide to visitors and includes online purchasing information for trail-related materials; and (3) the *Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook*, now in process at the University of North Carolina Press with a projected publication date of winter 2002. The guidebook will identify and thematically connect culturally important Cherokee sites and provide interpretation that includes the Cherokee perspective.

Agricultural Heritage

The Cherokee and their ancestors have lived in WNC for thousands of years. They farmed the fertile bottomlands along streams and rivers where periodic flooding enriched the soil. The men burned forested areas to open up small clearings and fertilize the soil - a method known as slash and burn. Women were the primary farmers, planting corn, beans and squash together in large mounds or hills of earth. This method ensured good drainage during wet months, simplified weeding and provided uniform spacing for crops. **At the Oconaluftee Indian Village in Cherokee, herb gardens and nature trails reveal trees used for canoes and multiple plants used for healing. Seventy-five percent of medicinal plants known to grow in the United States grow in the region.** Most revered of all crops was "selu" or corn around which the Green Corn Ceremony the tribe's most solemn annual function evolved.

In the late 1700s, English, German, Scotch-Irish, French, Welsh and African settlers came seeking land and more prosperous lives. Settlers farmed lands previously cultivated by the Cherokee or cleared small amounts of "new ground," readily adopting the agricultural practices of Native Americans. Their small self-sufficient farms, often called "scratch ankle" farms, provided for the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter as well as foods hunted and gathered from the forests. **They introduced a European pattern of raising livestock both for food and trade.** Cattle and sheep foraged on pastures or on grassy balds while pigs roamed the forests and orchards. This pattern did not require much attention from farmers busy raising crops and clearing land. Thus, mountain farmers combined cultural patterns of growing crops and raising livestock.

Currently, farming patterns are demonstrated and preserved at several sites around the region. **The Mountain Farm Museum at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center in Cherokee** depicts the early 1900s farming lifestyle with its collection of historic log buildings moved to the site in the 1950s. In addition, farm animals move freely about the grounds and in barns filled with antique farm implements. **The Miller Century Farm** in Ashe County is a microcosm of Blue Ridge agricultural heritage. This fifth generation farm continues to produce corn, molasses, wheat and cattle using antique farm tools. Currently, its produce is grown in greenhouses for year-round production. **The Historic Johnson Farm** in Henderson County, a 19th-century tobacco farm, features 15 acres of grassy fields, forests and a barn-loft museum containing early farm artifacts.

After the Civil War, WNC experienced great changes as a result of industrialization, urbanization, and railroad construction. New rail lines opened the region to extraction companies changing the landscape and the economy. Land purchased for timber and mining companies, and for inclusion in national forests and parks decreased the amount of property left for farming. Farms decreased in acreage and in number. By the 1930s, farmers were growing specialized crops as tobacco to earn cash. Following World Wars II, many people never returned to the farm, or if they did return it was with different expectations. Technological developments during the war led to new pesticides, herbicides and automated equipment along with more involvement from the federal government in technical assistance and subsidies.

A symbol of this change wrought by the industrial revolution was the construction of the **Biltmore Estate**. The 75-acres of gardens at the estate, designed by landscape architect Olmsted, are internationally renowned for annual and perennial displays of tulips, daffodils, roses, dogwoods and azaleas. Each spring, the annual Festival of Flowers provides a Victorian celebration of gardens. In 1983, the Biltmore Estate Wine Company was established. The first vineyards, planted in 1971, contained French-American hybrids followed by vinifera plantings a few years later. After years of experimentation and research the Winery opened in 1985 with state-of-the-art production technology. It is considered to be the most visited winery in the world, with over 500,000 visitors annually.

In the foothills, the Town of Valdese is home to Waldensian emigrants from Italy, whose ancestry dates back prior to the religious Reformation. Many present-day descendants still live within the original settlement and reflect their heritage in festivals, dramas, museums and churches. The **Villar Vintners Winery** is maintained by descendents of the original families. Concord and Niagara grapes are fermented and bottled into light, different dry, semi-sweet and sweet wines producing more than 4,000 gallons each year. Although many of the grapes are grown in New York's Finger Lake region, a demonstration vineyard now produces 200 gallons annually and has begun purchasing grapes from local farmers.

Today's farmers are exploring a combination of strategies including diversifying crops, preserving farmland and increased marketing to the regional community. Vegetable crops, ornamentals, Christmas trees, mushrooms and trout farming have become part of the

diversification. Farmers are producing crops in greenhouses, growing hydroponic lettuce, cultivating herbs, planting native botanicals such as ginseng and golden seal, and managing pick-your-own businesses. Farming for the region's future will be a cultural evolution. Thus, the region's agricultural heritage of working the land will continue to be a basic element in its culture and national identity.

The Study Area contains the largest number of specialty crop farms in North Carolina. At Perry's Water Gardens in Macon County, 13 acres of walking trails provide a study of thousands of blooms at the **largest aquatic nursery** in the United States. In Graham County, at the end of the "road to nowhere," a Jersey Dairy is one of four licensed cheese facilities in WNC where the Yellow Creek Pottery and Cheese produces cheddar and jalapeno varieties as well as a working pottery studio. The Posey Hollow Farm in Polk County produces a variety of vegetables and a kitchen manufacturing facility for jams, jellies, pickles, relish, chutneys, honey and hot sauces. The Sandy Mush Herb Nursery typifies many of these specialty crop farms with five water gardens, 80 varieties of herbs, shrubbery and trees.

Farms, Gardens, and Countryside Trails of Western North Carolina Project
In January of 1998, HandMade in America organized a criteria-setting meeting in which citizens from 17 public and private interests established criteria for sites to be included in **the *"Farms, Gardens and Countryside Trails of Western North Carolina."*** A total of 11 community meetings with over 100 citizens resulted in the identification of agricultural and horticultural resources in their communities. **The guidebook features over 450 sites of farms, gardens, orchards, farmer's markets, vineyards, nurseries with demonstration gardens, garden art shops, bed and breakfasts with garden areas, restaurants featuring local produce, walking trails, nature attraction and agricultural heritage sites.**

The HandMade in America Website, wnccrafts.org, will provide information for trail-related products and publications. In addition, links will be made to travel and tourism venues for the region's farming community, and the agri-trails project has received funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and Golden Leaf Foundation to develop business, marketing, and hospitality training for trail participants. It is anticipated that a series of cluster modules for training will develop along each of the six trails. Other products include the development of tours and weekend itineraries for visitors with an emphasis on educational programs.

The tours and itineraries being developed include bonsai or perennial garden weeks, weekend gardening and cooking schools combos such as "Garden to Table" and "Seeds to Sauce," packages for family and child-oriented vacations at the farm, and educational curriculums for third and fourth graders to be used in school systems throughout the region.

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